DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 211 940 CS 006 447

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TITLE Publishers' Responsibilities in Meeting the Continuing Challenge of Literacy. Literacy: Meeting the Challenge.
INSTITUTION Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Right to Read Program.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the National Right to Read Conference (Washington, DC, May 27-29, 1978). For related documents see ED 190 997 and CS 006 442-449.
AVAILABLE FROM Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Research; *Educational Responsibility; Evaluation Methods; *Instructional Materials; *Literacy; *Publishing Industry; *Reading Instruction; Reading Materials; Research Needs; Textbook Selection

ABSTRACT

The sixth of eight related documents, this booklet is part of a series of papers presented at the 1978 National Right to Read Conference examining issues and problems in literacy. In examining the publisher's role in facilitating literacy, this booklet distinguishes between responsiveness to the express desires of schools and responsibility for the welfare and development of learners, arguing that publishers of educational materials fail to fulfil their responsibility in meeting the challenge of literacy, largely because they assess their performance by the reactions of teachers--whose inordinate dependency upon published materials obscures their judgment. After defining responsibility and the new challenge of literacy, the paper cites research to establish, first, the extent to which teachers depend upon published materials, and second, the discrepancy between their evaluation of materials and those elicited from learners. Arguing that the latter are in the best position to indicate the educational value of materials, it proposes that publishers have a responsibility to educate purchasers, to field test their formulas and the materials to implement them, and to collaborate on their experiences. The paper concludes by recommending modifications in a proposal that the publishing industry establish a university research center, including an extension of the center's functions. (HTH)

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LITERACY: MEETING THE CHALLENGE

Publishers' Responsibilities in Meeting the Continuing Challenge of Literacy

Kenneth Komoski

CS206467

The material in this booklet was prepared pursuant to a contract with the Right to Read Program, U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Contractors undertaking such work are encouraged to express freely their professional judgments. The content does not necessarily reflect Office of Education policy or views.

The material in this booklet was presented at the National Right to Read Conference, Washington, D.C., May 27-29, 1978. The material was edited by the staff of the National Institute of Advanced Study which conducted the Conference under contract from the U.S. Office of Education.

FOREWORD

A major goal of the Right to Read Program has been to disseminate information about the status of literacy education, successful products, practices and current research finding in order to improve the instruction of reading. Over the years, a central vehicle for dissemination have been Right to Read conferences and seminars. In June 1978, approximately 350 Right to Read project directors and staff from State and local education and nonprofit agencies convened in Washington, D.C. to consider Literacy: Meeting the Challenge.

The conference focused on three major areas:

- examination of current literacy problems and issues
- assessment of accomplishments and potential resolutions regarding literacy issues; and
- exchange and dissemination of ideas and material on successful practices toward increasing literacy in the United States.

All levels of education, preschool through adult, were considered.

The response to the Conference was such that we have decided to publish the papers in a series of individual publications. Additional titles in the series are listed separately as well as direction for ordering copies.

SHIRLEY A. JACKSON
Director
Basic Skills Program

LITERACY: MEETING THE CHALLENGE

A Series of Papers Presented at the National Right to Read Conference May 1978

Assessment of Reading Competencies
Donald Fisher

How Should Reading Fit Into a Pre-School Curriculum
Bernard Spodex

Relating Literacy Development to Career Development
Allen B. Moore

Private Sector Involvement in Literacy Effort
"The Corporate Model for Literacy Involvement"
Lily Fleming
"Reading Alternative: Private Tutoring Programs"
Daniel Bassill
"Building Intellectual capital: The Role of Education in Industry"
Linda Stoker

Who is Accountable for Pupil Illiteracy?
Paul Tractenberg

Publishers' Responsibilities in Meeting the Continuing Challenge of Literacy
Kenneth Komoski

Can Public Schools Meet the Literacy Needs of the Handicapped?
Jules C. Abrams

The Basic Skills Movement: Its Impact on Literacy
Thomas Sticht

Literacy: Competency and the Problem of Graduation Requirements
William G. Spady

Projections In Reading
"Teaching Reading in the Early Elementary Years"
Dorsey Hammond
"Adult Literacy"
Oliver Patterson
"Reading Programs: Grades Seven Through Twelve"
Harold Herber

SUMMARY

Overview

Distinguishing between responsiveness to the express desires of schools and responsibility for the welfare and development of learners, this paper argues that publishers of educational materials fail to fulfill their responsibility in meeting the challenge of literacy, largely because they assess their performance by the reactions of teachers, whose inordinate dependency upon published materials obscures their judgment. After defining responsibility and the new challenge of literacy, neither measurable in such quantitative terms as sales figures, the paper cites research to establish, first, the extent to which teachers depend upon published materials and, second, the discrepancy between their evaluations of materials and those elicited from learners. Arguing that the latter better indicate the educational value of materials, it proposes that publishers have a responsibility, largely unfulfilled, to gather and use feedback directly from learners. It further proposes that publishers fail in their responsibility to educate purchasers, to field-test their formulas and the materials that implement them, and to share their experience with one another. Citing as one cause for optimism a proposal that the publishing industry establish a university research center, it concludes by recommending modifications of that proposal, including an extension of the center's functions.

Responsibility, Literacy, and Publisher-Purchaser Symbiosis

Responding to the extemporaneous remarks of a publisher and a writer of children's readers, the author begins by remarking the symbiotic relationship between commercial publishers of reading materials and teachers, who use the materials to structure virtually all the time devoted to reading instruction. Up until recently this relationship has gone unscrutinized, neither party wishing to acknowledge it or assess its consequences. As a result, the failure of publishers to produce materials that accommodate the motivational, intellectual, experiential, emotional, and creative needs of learners has received scant attention. However, publishers also have not been found wanting in responsibility because responsibility has been confused with responsiveness and hence measured by sales figures. Similarly, sales figures have been misconstrued as evidence that they are meeting the challenge of literacy, whereas the challenge today requires us to measure not how many people read and how much, but how well they understand and think about what they read.

Teachers' Dependency Upon Materials

EPIE Institute studies, corroborated by other research, show that learners receive approximately 98 percent of their instruction from materials rather than teachers. Such findings imply that materials must attend to all the human dimensions of learners and will stimulate evaluations that conclude they do not. They also indicate that teachers depend upon materials to structure virtually all classroom activity.

Publishers' Failures of Responsibility

Such dependency may help explain why teachers generally express satisfaction with materials that learners consider boring or corny; research suggests not that they judge more acutely, but that dependency vitiates their professional objectivity. Thus publishers cannot legitimately use positive teacher ratings to confirm their performance. Nor can they defend the quality of their materials by asserting that experienced teachers write them or that teachers test them in the classroom prior to publication, first, because teachers do not necessarily have the complex of skills required to develop outstanding materials, especially when so many rely so heavily upon existing materials, and second, because field-testing emphasizes marketing rather than improving materials and does not assess their service to the learner. The learner's response demands attention not only because teachers may judge uncritically, but because the evaluations of adults who choose books for children differ markedly from the evaluations proferred by children themselves, and it is the latter that predict the influence books will have on them.

Publishers argue that commercial survival requires that they attend more to teachers, the purchasers, then to learners, the ultimate consumers. In doing so, however, they abrogate their responsibility to educate purchasers and thus violate the tradition that elevated publishing to a profession. Moreover, the fact that publishers initiated the development of vocabulary controlled readers, creating rather than responding to a purchaser demand, indicates that schools do not so thoroughly control them as they maintain.

The failure of the publishers to test the concept and formula of controlled vocabulary is symptomatic of the industry's tendency to appropriate formulas from experts without assessing how well specific types of learners can handle the materials that implement them. An empirical test of the instructions included in a popular reading program indicates that publishers not only depend uncritically upon readability formulas, but apply them inconsistently as well.

Finally, publishers fail in their responsibility to learners by keeping their acquired wisdom to themselves, thus condemning other publishers to repeat

and discover the same mistakes. Because publishers who have learned how to conduct efficient learner verification and revision programs have not shared their experience, most publishers continue to gather their data from teachers or not to incorporate the data they gather from learners in revisions.

Recommendations for A Research and Training Program

There are, nevertheless, reasons for optimism. Accumulating research on the role of instructional materials in the classroom is creating a propitious climate for discussion and debate. Some publishers have initiated effective learner verification and revision programs. Moreover, the president of a major publishing company has recently proposed that the industry establish a research center at a university. Despite the responsibility thus evinced, however, the proposal requires modifications. The program should receive some of its funds from universities and the Federal Government; draw its staff from at least three major universities; offer training leading to a professional degree for those involved in and aspiring to careers in publishing; and publish a scholarly journal, underwritten by subscriptions that publishers would take out for all their employees who could use it.

PUBLISHERS RESPONSIBILITY IN MEETING THE CONTINUING CHALLENGE OF LITERACY

There's another, quite different view from that just presented by these industry representatives of how well publishers are meeting their responsibilities to consumers. This quite different—and quite valid—view hinges on a peculiar factor which relates to and colors whatever one can say about "the responsibilities of publishers" in relation to the education market—particularly when it comes to commercially published reading materials. This factor is the symbiotic relationship that exists between the publishers and the purchasers of curriculum materials. This relationship is underscored by recent research that has found that the overwhelmingly dominant instructional activity in the majority of this country's classrooms focuses on reading and the related language arts, and that commercially published materials, according to our research at EPIE Institute, are used by teachers to structure 90-95 percent of instructional time in reading as well as in all other curricular areas.

The ramifications of this unique corporate-curricular connection are what I want to direct your attention to as we consider the topic, "the responsibility of publishers." But before I turn to that topic, I'd like very briefly to examine the idea of *responsibility* in general. There are at least two levels at which one may view oneself as being "responsible." The first level takes into account the *responsiveness* to others of those who have given, or have been chosen to take one, a particular personal or societal responsibility. For instance, politicians are often judged on the basis of how *responsivie* they are to the moods, needs, expectations, aspirations, and beliefs of voters (i.e. primarily measurable in terms of how many people vote for them). Corporations account for themselves in terms of how well their products or services are "responding" to the needs of the market (i.e., usually measurable in terms of how many are being sold). Government, likewise, talks about being responsive to the governed. To judge responsibility on this level is to judge it largely on the basis of quantitative measures. To make use of quantitative criteria makes things a lot simpler and neater as well as creating an aura of confidence that we often hear summed up in the expression, "Numbers don't lie." Well, if it's true that numbers don't lie, it is also true that relying on numbers tends to *numb* our sensibilities to others, less quantifiable, yet—I would argue—more important, criteria by which *responsibility* should be judged. Large positive numbers on corporate balance sheets tend to numb stockholders into a state from which they will hardly ever consider how well that corporation is servicing, preserving, or improving the quality of life for the people who are using its products. Large sales numbers tend to numb corporate executives to the need to ask how well their products are serving the more qualitative needs of their

consumers. Similarly, election landslides tend to numb public debate on important qualitative social questions.

Thus, when we ask ourselves about "the responsibility of publishers" in meeting "the challenge of literacy," I want to be sure that we and—more importantly—*they* judge how well they are meeting that responsibility in terms of the more difficult qualitative questions, rather than being satisfied with easy quantitative answers. If we use quantitative criteria alone, there is simply no argument that publishers have been meeting the "challenge of literacy" successfully, ever since Gutenberg. And no one can deny—or fail to be impressed—that today there are more books being published and sold than ever before, and that there seems to be no end in sight to that continuing increase. Of course, one does tend to wonder whether these books are being read, and more importantly, *how well they are being read.* But the numbers are so large, and so unremitting, that indeed, in one sense, they do not lie. The numbers can, and do numb us, however, to the *new challenge to literacy.* Today, the challenge of literacy is no longer the simpler, quantitative one of a simpler time. During the days when compulsory free education was spreading and expanding throughout the U.S., gains in literacy could be measured in terms of how many people were learning to read, and how many books and newspapers were being sold. Today, in a tougher time, we dare not measure how well we are meeting the challenge of literacy other than in terms of *how well how many* of us are reading. For to have learned to read well means to have learned to think well—a point we have just heard Assistant Secretary Berry make in her luncheon talk. If we have—as we should—some sense that we are in a "race between education and catastrophe"—words of H. G. Wells, which I firmly espouse—then the quality not only of education but of our collective future depends upon our meeting this new, contemporary challenge of literacy, to produce *thinking readers.*

Believing this as I do, my message to you today is that publishers are failing to meet this new qualitative-literacy challenge. They are failing, at least in part, because they measure their work largely in quantitative terms, and this tends to stifle discussion and debate over how publishers—and especially educational publishers—should be fulfilling their responsibility to help schools and teachers develop readers capable and confident of their ability not simply to read, but to read, to comprehend, and to think.

Now publishers, of course, will maintain that this is precisely what they are doing, *that they are being responsive and hence responsible* to the demands of the schools. But being responsive to the demands of "schools" is not necessarily the same thing as responsibly meeting the needs of learners who attend these schools. Now, I will not maintain that there aren't publishers attempting to do this, but I do maintain that there are very, very few publishers who are achieving it. Having said this, I have come back again to the comment with which I began, concerning the unique symbiotic relationship in American

education between the educational publishers and the educational purchasers of classroom instructional materials.

One of the peculiar aspects of this publisher-purchaser symbosis is that neither party has been willing to recognize or to discuss openly this peculiar relationship and its implications for learners. And yet, an acknowledgement of the enormous dependency of the schools on the products of the education industry for carrying out the teaching of learners must be central to any probing discussion of publishers' responsibilities. Both publishers and purchasers are aware of the importance of instructional materials in the instructional programs of schools. They are aware, however tacitly, of the dependency of classroom teachers upon these materials to provide learners with a structure for their day to day learning. Nevertheless, prior to the relatively recent research studies undertaken by the EPIE Institute in its National Survey and Assessment of Instructional Materials (NSAIM), (1976) and the more recent published studies by others, there has been no open, on-going discussion of this enormous instructional dependency.

For instance, in a careful study of the role of curriculum materials in classroom instruction, Davis, Frymier and Clinefelter (1977) found that most curriculum materials used were print-based, as much as 78 percent. . . ."[This may be interpreted as a somewhat higher percentage than the 65 percent of classroom time devoted to the use of print materials reported in EPIE Institute's National Survey and Assessment of Instructional Materials]. They also found "...that during the 65 pupil school days [during which learners across the country were observed to discover how often and how many materials they used] only a very few people [i.e., teachers] were used as curriculum materials." In fact, in the tabular display of their data regarding the use of all types of instructional media in classrooms, these researchers report that the relative percentage of use of "people" vis-a-vis other instructional media in classroom instruction was 1.9 percent. Putting it another way, these researchers found that approximately 98 percent of the instructional messages received by classroom learners came directly from print and non-print instructional materials rather than from teachers. The finding that teachers report instructional materials are being used 95 percent of classroom time by learners, is identical to EPIE's.

As this sort of research evidence mounts up, increasing attention will inevitably be paid to instructional materials, and it will become clear that it is irresponsible for publishers and purchasers alike not to discuss openly the reality that materials are the central focus of what is learned or not learned in classrooms. I also think that as more research of the sort begun by Davis, Frymier and Clinefelter looks more intently at the extent to which the publishers and purchasers of instructional materials are effectively attending to such matters as the motivational, intellectual, experiential, emotional, and creative needs of learners, most of today's classroom materials (as well as

their use by teachers) will be found wanting in these human dimensions. I further believe that until those publishers and purchasers give these matters the attention they deserve, schools will not be able to capitalize on the important concomitant research on "engaged academic time" recently summarized by Rosenshine and Berliner (1978).

In in-depth interviews with learners across the country, individually and in small groups, EPIE is discovering that learners find few materials to be particularly motivating, interesting, or challenging to work with. Indeed many of today's most used materials are characterized by learners as "boring" or "corny."

However, EPIE has also found that, in general, *teachers are quite content with these same materials.* My own explanation for this phenomenon, is that many teachers are so dependent on materials for structuring the moments, hours and days of classroom activity, that they tend to be something less than professionally objective in their judgments of the quality of materials they use. For when asked what they would do if their were denied the use of the specific materials they were currently using, most teachers respond that they would simply use a commercially available alternative.

Now, you may be asking yourself, "Don't these findings about teacher satisfaction with the materials they are using indicate that publishers are doing a good job in meeting their responsibilities? Well, I agree that the findings have a great deal to say about *the way* in which publishers are fulfilling their responsibilities, but very little about *how well* publishers are meeting them *or* about *how they ought to be meeting those responsibilities.*

The conjecture that the finding that teachers are as content as they are with the materials they are using is more a measure of teacher dependence on materials than an indication of the quality and objectivity of their judgment about them is supported by other findings as well: (1) Forty-five percent of the more than 12,000 teachers heard from told EPIE researchers that they had had no role in selecting the materials they were currently using. But this forty-five percent were no less content with the quality of their materials than were the fifty-five percent who had had a role in selecting materials they used. (2) The Michigan State Department of Education reported in its Cost-Effectiveness study that student achievement in compensatory education programs was found to be greater in classrooms in which teachers had been allowed to select instructional materials being used than in classrooms in which the teachers had not selected the material being used.

It is not surprising, however, that publishers take all positive teacher ratings of the materials they are using as continuing confirmation that, as publishers, they are doing the right thing. Consequently, each year more materials are published which are very much like the materials teachers are already using.

These very-much-alike materials continue to sell more or less as well as their predecessors have sold in previous years. And these continuing, stable sales figures give the education industry—and the executives and stockholders of individual companies—what amounts to an annual vote of confidence from school purchasers. In addition publishers are reinforced by their salesmen, who regularly ask teachers how well they like the materials that have been purchased from their company. Not surprisingly—in light of the research reported above—these salesmen report back to their bosses that teachers are quite satisfied with their company's materials. Thus, both sales figures and salesmen prove continuously to the industry at large that it is responsive to school purchasers and teacher users of the materials it is producing. The products are selling, they are used, and the purchasers seem satisfied. This pretty much has been the situation during the entire 150-year history of the educational publishing industry. But at this point, attempts are being made to understand the special relationship between educational publishers and educational purchasers, and to explore the subtle but important differences between being responsive and meeting one's full responsibilities.

It is apparent that publishers do everything they can to be responsive to those who purchase school materials. But, as I have intimated, being responsive to the demands of purchasers does not necessarily include being responsible to learners, who are, after all, the ultimate consumers of the publishers' product. In a candid article in *The Teachers College Record* a few years ago, which was entitled "What's Wrong with Textbooks?," a one-time textbook editor, Eric Broudy, wrote that during his years in the industry, educational publishing's maxim was : "Yes, but kids don't buy books, teachers do." The consequences of the attitude implicit in his maxim are apparent throughout the design and development of all types of instructional materials. They are designed and developed based on what those who publish and those who do in fact "buy the book" *feel* they ought to be like. Seldom, if ever, are learners tapped for information that would tell both publisher and purchaser—in advance—how motivating, intellectually challenging, or related to learners' experiences a given material may or may not be.

Having leveled this accusation at the educational industry more than once, I am accustomed to receiving a standard response (one that was built into the presentation made by the industry representatives here today) which runs something like this: "The people who write our materials are either teachers or former teachers, who have either taught what they are writing about, or will arrange to have classroom teachers use our materials with students before we publish them." In some cases, all, or at least some, of these things are true. However, there are a number of assumptions floating around in such a statement of questionable validity.

Creating a learning material that will engage, hold the attention, and purposefully channel the energy of learners, requires that complex instruc-

tional, motivational, intellectual, verbal, and visual communications tasks be carried out with consummate skill in a variety of media. I do not accept as valid the publishers' argument that because someone has taught a particular subject—and "taught" it, let's remember, making very heavy use of an existing instructional material—he or she necessarily has the skills needed to develop a mediated material from which learners will learn. Furthermore, I seriously question whether having teachers try out a soon-to-be-published material, in order to get those teachers' reactions to it, can tell a publisher as much as he ought to know about the extent to which a material is capable of doing its job for learners. It should also be noted that most of such classroom tryouts are conducted primarily for product marketing and promotion purposes rather than for product-improvement purposes. While publishers now spend a fair amount of money on such "field (market) testing," part of their standard response to my request for more targeted testing of materials *directly with learners* is that such testing would add to the cost of the product. My response to this is that the few publishers who have responded to my suggestion by carrying out such learner testing are having to charge schools no more for their products than other publishers do for theirs.

The practice of using adult opinion as a substitute for information gathered directly from the ultimate consumers of products is not limited to educational publishing. It is true also of the publication of children's books for the trade. I was unaware of this fact until a few years ago when I happened to come across a modest, but nonetheless provocative study reported in *Publisher's Weekly*, which was as simple as it was ingenious. As I recall, it involved the use of three distinct groups of judges of juvenile books. The first group was composed of bookstore personnel who had the job of choosing which juvenile books their bookstore would stock. The second group was made up of adults typical of adults who regularly purchase juvenile books either for their children, or children of friends or relatives. The third was a group of children representative of youngsters of the age and reading level the books were being marketed for.

This study was the first that we at EPIE had ever come across which aimed at finding out which juvenile books appeal to the very juveniles for whom they are being produced and recommended, as compared to books which appeal to the adults who decide which books will be purchased for these youngsters. When the study appeared, EPIE reported it in its educational consumers' newsletter, *EPIEgram*, hoping to encourage publishers to develop a systematic, ongoing knowledge-base drawn from the reactions of the ultimate consumers of their juvenile books. To our knowledge, there has been no movement toward developing such an ongoing system of direct consumer feedback.

The results of the study reported on in *Publisher's Weekly* were that there is a marked discrepancy between the books chosen, and the criteria used, by the

ultimate consumers of the books—the kids who were expected to read them—and the books chosen by the adults who ultimately decided which book would be bought.

At this point, I would like to state a simple truth. This is a truth that I believe is quite important for the ultimate health—perhaps even survival—of our society. It is that the unsophisticated evaluations that youngsters are continually making of the school books and the trade books that adults develop for their use (in many cases, *legislated* and *compulsory* use) are far more valid as predictors of what will be read, understood, used, remembered, and lived with by these youngsters, than the complex, commercially motivated "evaluations" by means of which most textbooks and trade books reach the market.

The predictable publisher reaction to this "simple" truth is to say that the "real" truth is just not *that simple*, that publishers must first and foremost stay in business as *publishers*. That is, no matter what they might want to do, what they must do is to make sure that their products are acceptable to people who are in a position to purchase them. And this means paying close and primary attention to the stated and unstated criteria used by those purchasers. Therefore, if purchasers do not emphasize learner feedback and learner evaluations as criteria when buying books, then publishers will continue to feel justified in paying little attention to the use of learner feedback in developing and in revising their materials.

I am concerned about publisher preoccupation with this sort of responsiveness, because it turns its back on the important publisher *responsibility* to educate not only the consumers (i.e., learners) but also the purchasers of their products. There is a long and honorable tradition in publishing that says that a publishing company does have a responsibility to educate and to develop and maintain standards of quality among its clientele. For much of its early history, that tradition set publishing apart from other crasser businesses. In fact, it made publishing a profession, not just a business. This tradition has been eroded during the last century, as, more and more, commercial considerations have come to dominate the publishing world.

Some publishers with whom I have talked, though quite honorable people, take the position that in educational publishing, one's responsibility is purely and simply to be responsive to purchasers. If purchasers are demanding—as they did a generation ago—"new math", the publishers will vigorously respond with textbooks that they perceive to be acceptable as "new math". Today, when those new textbooks have produced an *aftermath* of "back-to-basics" backlash, educational publishers are working just as hard to produce textbooks that will be perceived as taking classrooms "back to basics". The same sort of responsiveness can be seen in the publishing of reading and language arts materials. Once unfashionable, phonics, predictably, has been once again given a central place in reading programs. And just as predictably,

phonics will once more fade from fashion as publishers respond to some other purchaser demand in the teaching of reading.

But educational publishers are not as controlled by what schools say they want as they sometimes maintain. We can find ample evidence of this fact in the area of reading materials. Of particular interest is the role publishers played in the mid-1930's when they introduced controlled vocabulary readers.

Despite what you may have understood, the idea of carefully controlling the number of new words introduced into reading texts and juvenile trade books did not come from school people. It arose instead out of the experiences of a gentleman by the name of John West, who had found that introducing no more than two new words per hundred words of text proved successful in his teaching of English as a second language to adults in India. On hearing about West's experience with his formula for controlling vocabulary, an editor at Scott, Foresman discussed it with William S. Gray, a professor at the University of Chicago, and a Scott, Foresman consultant. According to Dr. Paul Dederich, now retired from a respected research career at the Educational Testing Service, who during the 30's was a graduate student of Grey's, the decision of Scott, Foresman to incorporate the idea of a controlled vocabulary using West's formula in the new "Dick and Jane" readers, came about as a result of that discussion.

Because of the success of the Scott, Foresman series, the rest of the industry was soon publishing controlled vocabulary readers. School purchasers rather quickly accepted the controlled vocabulary idea, and, in time, actually made it a criterion against which the acceptability of reading materials were to be judged. In this case, it is very clear than an industry-created demand became a school-purchaser demand.

It is interesting to note that both the concept and the formula of controlled vocabulary became an accepted element of classroom reading materials without anyone's ever having empirically tested their validity with classroom learners. Had they done so, they might have found out that some modifications were in order. As Paul Dederich put it in an article on the problems of creating interesting reading materials:

> West urged this practice on the people who were writing first-year texts in foreign languages, but I never heard him apply it to basal readers in the native language. Furthermore, after he had worked up to a recognition vocabulary of about 1,500 words, he stopped counting how often he introduced new words. With that many of the most common words already known, he reasoned that new words would almost inevitably be surrounded by enough familiar words to make them easy to learn. He never dreamed that anyone would still be counting the previously unused words after five or six years of instruction in reading the native language.

I believe that the manner in which educational publishers have promoted and maintained a market demand for controlled vocabulary readers for over

forty years, proves the persuasive effect they can have on educational purchasers when they put their minds and their salesmen to work. I also believe that it is in the enlightened self-interest of educational publishers today to examine the validity of using formulas in the development of reading materials, whether it's a formula for controlling vocabulary or one for measuring a book's readability. The unimaginative adherence of publishers to such formulas and the marketing and selection of classroom materials on the basis of ratings using such formulas is simply a way out for those publishers and purchasers who are unwilling to accept the full burden of professional responsibility for their decisions. It's a lot easier to rely on the professional credibility of the formulas of Dale-Chall, Flesch, or Fry than it is to spend one's time and energy finding out how well specific types of learners can handle the materials that will be purchased for their use.

In saying this, I do not mean to imply that readability formulas are, in and of themselves, a bad idea, but EPIE's research indicates that there is among educational publishers *both* an uncritical dependence on, *and* an inconsistent application of the current readability formulas. This kind of selective scientism needs to be purged with regular doses of empirical evidence gathered from the ultimate consumers of the product. Let me give you a concrete example of the selective use and simultaneous disregard of such formulas, coming out of EPIE's recent research on the reading programs most used in U.S. classrooms. In most cases, when the reading formula used by the publisher is applied to the reading selections themselves in a particular material, they are found to be at the level designated, but very often when the same readability formula is applied to the student directions printed in the material, these are found to be written at a considerably higher reading level.

Recently, one of the graduate students in my course on instructional materials research at Teachers College, Columbia examined this phenomenon in one of the most-used reading programs. We decided that she should study empirically how well the program could communicate to and engage the interest of fourth-grade students. Units appropriate to the level of development of the fourth graders she happened to be teaching were chosen and systematically tried with four of her students. The students selected were below average (1 student), average (2 students), and above average (1 student) in terms of their general school performance. They were observed individually as they worked through the units selected. In each case, the students had some minor difficulties with the reading selection around which the unit was built. However, each of the students, whatever his or her ability level, had enough difficulty reading the student directions to the pretest to the unit that their teacher/researcher had to intervene to help them understand what the pretest directions were directing them to do. Let me read you these directions in their entirety:

> You should understand that recognizing certain clue words in a story will help you to determine the time and the order in which events take place.

> In each of the numbered sentences below, two things are said to have happened. In some sentences, one thing is said to have happened before the other. In other sentences, the two things are said to have happened at the same time. Read each sentence carefully. Then draw one line under the event that happened first, and draw two lines under the event that happened second. In the sentences where both events are said to have happened at the same time, draw one line under both events. Draw a line around the clue word that lets you know the correct order. Two examples have been done for you.

These directions, with which all four youngsters had difficulty, actually measure at an upper fifth-grade level, using the Dale-Chall scale. This tends to point up the short-comings of current readability formulas when they are used to ascertain the clarity of what, for the want of a better name, I shall call "instructional prose". Current readability measures simply do not take into account the difficulty the human mind has when attempting to follow the sort of complex set of cognitive and motor directions the publisher of this reading program is expecting fourth graders to follow. Here's my graduate student's report on how her fourth graders handled these directions:

> All four students read the instructions carefully, looked at the sample, reread the instructions again, trying to relate the sample to the required task, but could not do so. All of them asked for my assistance. I told them to reread the instructions to themselves again and then look at the sample in order to follow what they are asked to do. Each one of them could not proceed. Then I asked them to read the instructions to me out loud. Then I told them to reread each statement of the instructions and tell me in their own words what they were expected to do. All were able to do this [i.e., read the directions]. Then I told them to repeat to me all the things they were supposed to do. Each of the children kept getting confused. They didn't remember how many lines to draw for the different elements. In addition, none of the children interpreted "Draw a line around," to mean draw a circle around the clue word, even though the sample clearly shows a circle around the clue word. After working with each of them for at least five minutes, all were able to proceed without any more assistance from me.

The finding that none of the children interpreted "Draw a line around", as meaning, "Draw a circle around", was of particular interest to students in this course because of a presentation made at an earlier class session by a guest lecturer I had invited: a professional in the publishing industry who, in my opinion, is one of the few doing a thoroughly responsible job in empirically shaping materials in response to direct learner feedback. He had said that one mistake his writers had been making in writing materials for early elementary school children was to use the direction, "Draw a line around". He reported that they eventually discovered from young students themselves that they had great difficulty in seeing a "line" as being other than straight, and that the idea of producing a circle by drawing a line around a correct answer was simply beyond them. On the other hand, they clearly understood the direction, "Draw a circle around."

This may seem to be a very small thing. But I can assure you that it is not for a youngster who can't understand what he or she is supposed to do in order to learn from a material that has been developed, marketed, selected, and purchased especially for his or her use.

Furthermore, this example of a single, confusing direction is revealing of one aspect of the failure of publishers to fulfill their responsibility to meet the challenge of developing and marketing materials that work with and for youngsters. This is the failure to openly share experience. Each company seems destined to make the same mistakes and to have to discover on its own even the simplest things that all could be doing to improve the readability, understandability, and teachability of each of the industry's products. Such a waste of human resources and knowhow is grossly irresponsible on the part of an industry whose very title announces that it is in business in order to educate. There is a desperate need for communication among all educational publishers concerning the techniques that can be used to improve the instructional quality of their products.

Here is another and, to me personally, a more poignant example of this need for communication among publishers. During the last decade, I have been a vigorous advocate of the concept of improving materials by means of feedback from learners. We at EPIE labeled the concept "Learner-Verification and Revision (L-V-R)", and we were very pleased when a few years ago a number of states began to require that publishers "learner-verify and revise" their materials. As a result, during the last few years, many publishers have begun to advertise the availability of "learner-verified" versions of certain of their materials. As part of their course work, some of my graduate students decided to contact these publishers to ascertain the type of information they have been gathering from learners, and what specific improvements they had made in their materials, using their learner feedback. They discovered that a few publishers are, indeed, beginning to get feedback directly from learners, by means of test data, careful observation of learners as they work with a material, and from interviews with learners during or after they have used a particular material. But most of the publishers who are advertising "learner-verified" materials are simply following the established patterns of having teachers use their materials, and then answer very general questions about how well they and their students liked the materials, and such matters as whether the content and skills seem properly sequenced and paced.

One of my students happened to be speaking by phone to the person who had been in charge of gathering data using one such teacher questionnaire and was told that although the questionnaire had been used, the LVR contractor used by the publisher had not been able to process the results in time for the editors to use them in making their revisions. Futile activity indeed. When this person (who said she had had LVR responsibilities for that company for two years) learned that there were some publishers who were not only gathering data directly from learners but were also learning to do this efficiently enough to process and use the data in improving their materials, she said with some longing in her voice that she wished she could find out more about what these other publishers were doing.

That such a situation exists is entirely the responsibility of the publishing

industry. Publishers are not only failing to carry out their responsibilities to the ultimate consumers of their products but to their own industry as well.

Having said what I have said here today, much of which I fear has been rather depressing, I must remind myself that I am, if not an eternal, at least a persistent, optimist. And I must ask myself whether I see any justifiable cause for optimism regarding the "Responsibility of Publishers". Well, for one thing, I think that the accumulating research on the importance and use of instructional materials in classroom instruction is encouraging. It is bringing about a climate in which more informed, open, and realistic discussion and debate on instructional materials and how to improve them can happen. Unfortunately, the climate will not prevail during this session. Due to the demands of the industry representatives here today concerning how our two hours together are being spent, there will be no time for debate of the issues I have raised in this paper. It is my hope, and indeed my conviction, however, that an open climate will eventually prevail. Secondly, the fact that at least some publishers are doing a creditable job in conducting direct consumer research on their products and then actually using the data to improve these products is also encouraging. Finally, there is the most encouraging, although at the moment still the most nebulous of recent developments: the suggestion by the president of a major publishing company, that the industry commit itself to undertaking a program of research studies at an industry-supported university research center. In general, I applaud this recommendation, which was made earlier this year by Alexander Burke, President of McGraw-Hill Book Company, in a speech to the Association of American Publishers. Industry recognition of the need to conduct such research is long overdue.

In the publishing industry's defense, however, I might say that perhaps one of the reasons it has waited so long to put forth, let alone act upon, a recommendation to fund such research, is that for over a decade, there has been a hope on the part of some people in the industry, that federally funded educational laboratories would conduct the sort of research that would show the way to the improvement of all types of instructional materials. However, this hope (which, interestingly, was voiced a decade ago by Mr. Burke's predecessor at McGraw-Hill, Robert Locke, in an article entitled, "Has the Education Industry Lost Its Nerve?") has not been realized. Rather, these federally funded laboratories have chosen to put most of their emphasis on product development and dissemination—which has to an extent competed with the education industry or has benefited individual publishers—rather than on product research that might have helped to move the industry as a whole toward developing more effective products. In light of this development, Mr. Burke's suggestion is timely and responsible.

However, encouraged as I am by the expression of publisher interest in supporting research that will improve the instructional effectiveness of their products, I am discouraged by his suggestion that such support take the form

of funds for a center for doctoral-level instructional-materials research to be set up at a *solely* industry-supported research center at *one* university.

Deeply held convictions, and a good deal of thought about the sort of research and professional training that will be necessary if the publishing industry is to fulfill its collective responsibility to future generations of young Americans have led me to the following conclusions and recommendations:

(1) It would not be wise for the publishing industry to supply the sole, or even the major, financial support for a research and training program. Ideally, funds to plan and carry out the program should come from three sources: the industry, the universities involved, and the Federal Government. The universities must be willing to commit some of their own funds in order to "own" the program, and the Federal education agencies should contribute a fair share—a proper way for them to subsidize the educational industry's endeavors in this area.

(2) The program should not be developed by one university alone. No single university has a broad enough configuration of professional talent to staff such an ambitious program. It should instead be offered by a consortium of at least three major universities.

(3) The program should not only conduct research, but should also offer training leading to a professional degree, for persons already working in the industry, as well as those aspiring to the profession.

[For this professional training, in addition to regular university faculty, the program should utilize as adjunct faculty, professionals in the industry—and from other universities and nonprofit research and development organizations—whose work on product improvement is such that others would benefit from their instruction.]

(4) The program should produce a professional journal of instructional materials research and improvement, which should be subscribed to by publishers for each employee for whom the journal would seem to have relevance. (This in itself should supply enough income to support the editing and printing of the journal). The journal would provide a single, central outlet and source for all product-related research.

I believe that such a research and training program must, and can, be established in the very near future through a consortium of major universities. The need for it is urgent. But, once it is established, we must recognize that it will take time for its benefits to accrue, and that a long-term commitment from the universities, the industry, and the Federal agencies will be necessary.

If I have communicated what I set out to say to you today, it is that there is a lot of work to be done by educational publishers, educational purchasers, and

educational researchers, if the educational publishing industry is to meet its changing, challenging responsibilities in the years ahead. In the interests of the country's millions of educational consumers, it is my hope that they will not fail in their collective mission.

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